Jessica Baldwin
Testimony to the State Board of Education
March 3, 2010

Re: Proposed Rearticulation of Science Standards (Grade 5, Grade 8, and Biology)

Good evening. My name is Jessica Baldwin and I am the Curriculum Specialist for Center City Public Charter Schools. We are six campuses serving 1,200 students in grades PreK-8. In my current role, I am responsible for overseeing curriculum development and implementation in all subject areas, including science. Additionally, I have taught science at the elementary and middle school level, and I have also conducted trainings in inquiry-based science for teachers in DC.

I was able to review the proposed rearticulation of the DC Science Standards for grades 5 and 8, which are the grades that are relevant to my current work. The revision is appealing to me because the standards have been organized to address broad concepts with indicators of success for each. This approach groups the standards into manageable chunks. At Center City, we have organized our pacing guides by unit, and this rearticulation validates our work. It is also apparent that the big ideas of the content are emphasized in this version of the standards document, through the articulation of strands. The original format of the standards reads more like a list of required knowledge and is not as effective at conveying the big ideas of the content.

The preamble of the rearticulation document gives a sense of the kinds of lab activities all students should be doing at these grade levels. Teachers often need guidance as to which hands-on activities will help students meet the target objectives. The activities listed in the preamble are authentic, inquiry-based, and rigorous – and they help teachers to make the content real for their students.

Each standard also clarifies if students are being introduced to a concept or topic, or if they should move beyond the initial level of understanding by the end of the grade. These descriptors would be very helpful for our teachers to keep in mind as they strive to ensure student proficiency in science. This also supports our work in vertically aligning our science curriculum, so that our students build on their content knowledge from grade to grade.

In short, I think that the rearticulation of the Science standards is clearer and more useful than the original format of the standards document. My hope would be all DC science standards—not just the ones in tested grades—will also be rearticulated in the future. The approval of these rearticulated standards would be in the best interest of our teachers and of our scholars.

Thank you.